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TAGS: [AORC](#) [EAID](#) [MA](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED: SUPPORTING THE AU'S EFFORTS TO  
ENSURE AN EARLY RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE IN MADAGASCAR

REF: STATE 35767

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown. Reasons 1.5 (b)  
and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Poloff discussed objectives for supporting the African Union's (AU) efforts to ensure an early return to constitutional rule in Madagascar with Department of Foreign Affairs Horn of Africa and Indian Ocean Islands Deputy Director Wolf Rothkegel on April 14. He said the South African Government's (SAG) position was "pretty much in line" with USG objectives and that SAG assistance to Madagascar was unofficially "on ice." Rothkegel said the SAG would develop a common position with SADC on the way forward based on reports from a second Southern African Development Community (SADC) delegation visit to Madagascar, which is expected to begin by the end of this week. End summary.

¶2. (C) Rothkegel said regional leaders went further than what he had recommended by suspending Madagascar from SADC membership at the March 30-31 SADC Summit. He wondered what SADC was prepared to do to back up its demand that President Marc Ravalomanana be restored to power. Rothkegel shares the USG view that donor countries should suspend all non-humanitarian aid to Madagascar in an attempt to bring about a quick restoration of democratic rule in Madagascar. He said South Africa will wait for the SADC delegation's report before deciding whether to approach donor countries on their assistance to Madagascar and how best to encourage a restoration of constitutional rule.

¶3. (C) Rothkegel thought Madagascar's trade with the region would suffer as a result of SADC suspension and the Rajoelina regime's decision to withdraw from SADC, although Madagascar will continue to trade with Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) countries. He noted that COMESA had not issued any statements on the political crisis in Madagascar and he remarked that COMESA was only "too glad for members to join rather than run away."

¶4. (C) Comment: Although many observers expected SADC to take the lead on responding to the political crisis in Madagascar, South Africa appears to be content to let the UN and AU take that role. Senior researcher David Zounmenou of leading African think tank the Institute for Security Studies laid out three reasons for South Africa's indifference. First, Madagascar does not share the same cultural identity as other southern African countries. Second, South Africa's involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other African conflicts was primarily due to the personalized foreign policy agenda of former President Thabo Mbeki. The SAG has not shown the same appetite for involving itself in foreign crises since Mbeki's removal from office. Third, South Africa has no real strategic interests in Madagascar. South African mining interests there and overall trade interests are relatively insignificant and Madagascar is distant from SADC's geographic center. Zounmenou also said the UN, AU, US and France had sidelined SADC because they did not see SADC as the best mediator for the current crisis in Madagascar and that SADC did not protest because "no one in SADC has particular interest in Madagascar." He believes

SADC will follow the AU's lead. End comment.

LA LIME